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John Scott's Letter to  
Mr Webster Morgan,  
Liverpool, 1829

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Wes. 1443

**A LETTER**

**TO**

**MR. WEBSTER MORGAN,**

**IN**

**REPLY TO A CIRCULAR,**

**ENTITLED**

**"LIVERPOOL NORTH CIRCUIT."**

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**By JOHN SCOTT.**

BW399

S3 L4

## A LETTER, &c.

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MY DEAR BROTHER,

WHEN I received your letter of January the 23d, I thought at first of writing you a reply, and of attempting to set you right upon some of those things, more especially, which you stated as matters of fact. Thinking, however, that your letter was private and confidential, that the mistakes which it contained were committed only to myself, and that, on most points, you had yourself the means of correcting them; believing too, that you would feel disposed to revise your opinions, when the *weariness of spirit*, produced by your late effort, had passed off, and your mind was refreshed, and once more calm and clear, I gave up the idea; having no taste whatever for controversy of this kind, and labouring under the press of other, and, I will add, holier engagements. This silence I supposed would terminate "the matter, at least," as you say, "until the Conference." You may then believe that it excited *my surprise*, when, on Monday morning, the 3d instant, I received from you the following note:

"DEAR SIR,—I hasten to express my surprise on receiving by this morning's post, a printed copy of my letter to you. How, or by whose interference, it has obtained this form, I do not know. It was late on the evening preceding the day on which I sent it to you, that I finished it. I brought it down town, and put it in the hands of a friend, for the purpose of his stating whether the sentiments were courteously and properly expressed. I received it back under cover, from another friend, and forwarded it to you. Whether it be a true copy or not, I cannot tell, having no copy myself.

In haste, I am, Sir,

Yours, in Christ Jesus,

"W. MORGAN."

Your "*friends*" seem not to be overcharged with honour and frankness in their private intercourse even with yourself. This is to be regretted, as one of them, at least, has prefaced your letter now published, and though he has not given his name, has put himself forth as the public guardian of Methodistic rights. This want of *private* honour, if it come to be publicly known, will, I judge, materially counteract the effect of his zeal in the *public* service; for all look for more than ordinary rectitude in those who step forward unasked, to straighten any obliquities in their fellow-men.\* Will you not yourself resent the "interference," which has surreptitiously taken your letter and given it to the world, and cease to act in concert with those "*friends*," who have in such a manner betrayed your confidence? Your own sense of manly honour and integrity, I should think would require this; besides a wish on your part to convince your *real* friends; that your note to me expresses no greater ignorance of the publication of your letter, nor surprise on that account, than you really felt.

As your "*friend*" has officiously made your letter public, and caused it to be generally circulated among our principal friends in this town, it may be due to myself, and to the system which I feel called to maintain, as far as my power may serve, briefly to notice this new publication, which is oddly enough entitled, "Liverpool North Circuit."

I cannot tell whose feelings your "*friend*" describes with justice, when he says that the acts of the Leeds Special District Meeting were "*painfully felt*" the last year, in this circuit, as "*an alarming infringement on the rights of the lay-officers and members of the society;*" nor who they were that looked to the Conference for their condemnation. In the course of a very free intercourse through the year with the people in my circuit, pastoral and friendly, I heard of one only who endeavoured to provoke the circuit to an interference. One thing I, however, know, that our September Quarterly Meeting was one of the most peaceful and harmonious that I ever attended; it did not, indeed, differ in peace and harmony from the four preceding ones which had passed since I came among you, except as the peace seemed more profound, and the harmony more perfect. One of our most intelligent

\* Matt. vii. 3-5.

Leaders, of long standing in the Society, has repeatedly remarked, of late, that, for upwards of thirty years, he had never left a Quarterly Meeting with equal pleasure, where the unity seemed so entire, and the indication of good so apparently certain. And this was after the Minutes of the Conference had been in the brethren's hands for about a month. How came it to pass that no murmur of dissatisfaction with the decision of Conference then escaped, if, indeed, pain and alarm were, at that time, so intensely felt? Pain and alarm I have always considered to be very unquiet feelings. If the brethren then felt them, as stated by your "friend," they did indeed "suppress" them with a witness! for never were faces more smooth and smiling, nor hearts apparently more perfectly at ease. When the Southwark Resolutions had been received, then, indeed, I heard expressions of dissatisfaction; then I heard that a few brethren said, "We think we are aggrieved." "By what?" it was asked. "Why read this book," was the answer, offering the Southwark Resolutions for the purpose; and then you, and three or four more of your brethren, actively began your endeavour to impress the cause of your dissatisfaction upon the minds of others, and to arrange your measures against the Quarterly Meeting.

You say, "You must give the friends credit who judged it proper to adopt any measures at all, for the candour they have shown; for, before any step was taken, you were consulted as to the proper steps to be taken." This seems very candid. You were not one who consulted me, or you would not have put this forward. One evening in October, two brethren, in a conversation as I returned home, did express some dissatisfaction with the decision of the Conference; they also expressed an opinion, that it was impolitic to repress the discussion of the subject in the regular meetings; for if men were not allowed to talk where the subject might be met, they would talk elsewhere. I said I had no wish to repress inquiry, and offered specially to meet any of the brethren who felt dissatisfied, to give them such information as might remove their objections; but I solemnly deprecated the introduction of the subject into any of our regular meetings, as it would only unsettle minds that were perfectly quiet, and divert minds that were better occupied than with such questions; and I deprecated more especially the mention of the subject to any of the private members of our classes—in this I was heartily joined by the brethren themselves. The next information which I received, was, that one hundred copies



of the Southwark Resolutions were imported, fifty of which were circulating among all the friends who held any office in the circuit. This, after the consultation, of course was following my advice! You add, "and you well recollect you never said, until it was brought into the quarterly meeting, that it was not a subject to be entertained at such a meeting." What *it*?—*it*, the "measures" which you judged it proper to adopt; or *it*, the "step" which you had taken? The fact is, I never knew what it was which you intended to bring forward at the Quarterly Meeting, until three days before the time; so that it would have been giving myself credit for too much prescience, had I said that what you might introduce, it would not be legitimate for such a meeting to entertain. When I received your resolutions, and considered the rule respecting Quarterly Meetings, I felt assured that the discussion of subjects such as you had introduced was never intended to be the business of such meetings; and this sentiment I expressed over and over to friends before we assembled. When the quarter day came, I preferred to preserve, rather than surrender, what I deem an important principle of Methodism, that meetings should not stray from the just business for which they assemble, into matters of "strife and debate:" at the same time, I myself anxiously desired an opportunity of attempting to set right my brethren who had been unsettled or misled. I therefore agreed to meet them, for that specific purpose, in a fortnight.

You certainly misrepresent, unwilfully I believe, the reason which I gave for desiring that the meeting should not be held on an earlier day;—it was not that I was unprepared to meet your resolutions. In the Quarterly Meeting, I stated that I was then prepared to show, that they were not only *not* Methodistical, but utterly *subversive* of all Methodism; but that I wished those brethren, who until that day were quite ignorant of what you intended to propose, to have time to perceive the character of your propositions, that *they* might be able to point out your errors, which, on some points, I desired that they should do, rather than that it should be left to me:—I pledged myself, however, that if they did not do so, I would.

Both you and your "friend" appear anxious that it should be thought the meeting was called, exclusively to deal with your resolutions. I certainly wished to show that you had adopted opinions on Methodistic government, which nothing in Methodism ever sanctioned; I wanted to preserve you from committing yourselves after the



example of a southern circuit; but I professed, at the time, a wider aim. Knowing that many good-intentioned and single-hearted brethren had been taught to suspect that something was wrong in our public affairs, I told the Quarterly Meeting, that I desired to give every one the fullest opportunity to express his mind on what had given him uneasiness, and I would try to set him right: I said, too, that I wished for an opportunity to express my opinion of the means which had been used to excite the uneasiness which existed. In short, my object in agreeing to meet the brethren was pastoral; to convince you, and the three or four who acted with you, that you were wrong; to satisfy every honest scruple which any one had felt respecting any of the acts of Conference; and to bring all my people back from questions of church polity, from an unprofitable attention to the exterior frame of the Christian temple, to a greater concern for the glory in the midst.

Mr. Watson's able pamphlet came in the meantime, and was read by many with full satisfaction. I had hoped that it might convince you, and the three or four who acted with you, that you had mistaken the rule which you had undertaken to interpret. This was the case, it would seem, in some measure; for, before the meeting assembled, you divested your principal resolution of its sweeping character, and moderated a little its confident tone, though you still retained the unconstitutional principle which it at first asserted. Having, therefore, pledged myself, I still continued bound to meet you, and endeavour to answer your objections.

You think that I "ought to have stated" to the meeting, at the commencement, that I could not put the motion. I never said I "*would* not put the motion." I never refused, as matter of mere authority, though you and your "friend" represent me as so acting; for what purpose but to render me and the office which I hold odious, I am at a loss to know. Mine was altogether a plea of constitutional inability—I *could* not, constitutionally, put such a motion as you had introduced. I had stated all along to every one who mentioned the subject, that I could put no resolutions, at any meeting, which were against any fundamental principle of Methodism. This I stated fully to the brethren who put your's into my hand; so that one of them said, at two different times, to two different brethren, "we do not expect that Mr. Scott will put the resolutions;" and the morning before the meeting, I told you, expressly, that the resolutions which you had introduced were such as I

could not put to vote. But you had, in the course of that day, *altered* them. You had; but the principle, though modified, was yet retained;—this I remarked when acquainted with the alteration. Had you, or any of the brethren, inquired when we met, Can you put the resolutions? I should have answered, frankly—No. As no one asked the question, I preferred waiting until I could assign my reasons to the meeting *why* I could not, as a Superintendent, entrusted with the system of Methodism to administer in your circuit, put resolutions to the vote, which were a direct denial of one of its important disciplinary regulations.

In two places you complain of the length of my address to the meeting, and suspect that I intended “to weary the patience of the brethren”—a suspicion *worthy* of a noble heart! It certainly did extend to a considerable length; and as I happened to be the last that spoke, it was late when I concluded; but, for the sake of fairness, let it be remembered, that you, and the three brethren who supported you, had time given, at an earlier period, to say whatever you chose. The brethren in general, however, showed no sign of impatience; but, late as it was, listened with marked attention. Then surely, some latitude was due to a person who, for *two months*, and with extreme pain, had observed that plans were in active operation, to unsettle the minds and alienate the affections of his people from himself and his brethren in the ministry, in some instances not without effect; and *two hours* could not fairly be regarded, under such circumstances, as too long to occupy, in an endeavour to set the brethren right on the important points of Methodism, which had been called in question; and to win back their affections to a body of ministers, whom they had not yet ceased to respect, and who I will not say are incorruptible, but who, I will affirm, are uncorrupted.

When Mr. Watson’s pamphlet was decried in the meeting as, in the greater part, *irrelevant* to the subject which he had undertaken to discuss, and as failing to prove the point in the short space which he devoted to the argument, of course, I could not expect, for my speech, the award of a richer palm:—“scarcely ten minutes,” you say, were “employed on matters relevant to the motion”—“but little of which had any fair reference to the motion.” Be it so: I repeat, that merely to prove your resolutions wrong was not my object. If, however, I proved, as I and a number of others believe that I did, that the position which you

had taken was against plain Methodistic rule, that was sufficient, whether it took me "ten minutes" or an hour; and the rest of my address, which went strongly, though mildly, to condemn the measures which had been taken "to agitate the societies in this place," as your "friend expresses it: to prejudice the judgment, and turn away the hearts of the people from the "ministers of Christ;" which also went to give the brethren present juster views of the rules which had been directly, or incidentally, brought into question; and to persuade them to a peaceful and united endeavour to promote the cause of God in our town and neighbourhood—this was not irrelevant to *my* purpose, which was to bring the brethren back to right opinions, and to right feeling. And if I occupied a part of the time, as you say, with the Southwark Address, I had just cause; for I did not forget that it had been the chief means used to arouse a peaceful people, who had no wrongs of their own of which to make complaint, into a resentment of wrongs which were boldly alleged to have been inflicted elsewhere. In proving, therefore, that it is essentially false in the statement from which its wonderful reasoning is projected, and which Mr. Watson so ably refutes, I was still steady to my purpose—to disabuse the innocent and unwary who had been misled.

Perhaps the most remarkable of all the remarkable and novel views which you have taken of the subjects introduced, is that in which you fancy that I intended to amuse the meeting by my quotations from Mr. Wesley and the early minutes; (are you sincere in this insinuation?) and think that I will not put my good sense to hazard by claiming for them any other use. Indeed, if I have any good sense I will risk it, and profess that I had a very different and a higher motive when I made them; and to the meeting that motive was sufficiently plain. You, and the brethren with you, had professed the purest regard for WESLEYAN Methodism, and the most anxious desire to see it preserved in its integrity;—this your resolutions, which, I understand, you intend to present to the Conference, decidedly avow. I divined beforehand, that you had not taken your views of Wesleyan Methodism from its only authentic records, the Minutes of the Conference and the writings of its Founder, but from other lights; and in this, it appears, I was not deceived. You say, "The advocates for the motion endeavoured to consider Methodism *as it has been generally understood*"—by whom? "*And in accordance with the*

*usage in this place for many years.*" Now if usage in this place for many years, has permitted important parts of Methodism to go into disuse, or sent them into banishment, which I cannot think, I can only say that it is time they were recalled; for neither you nor I have any authority to plead any local usage against any plain and fundamental rule: local usage may be permitted to guide us where the rules are silent, and the general and old-established usage of the Connexion at large affords no direction; but the rules of the system equally bind us all. By showing then, from the quotations which I made, the position in which the Preachers stood, and the authority which the pastoral office possessed, in our Connexion, up to the time of Mr. Wesley's death, up to 1797; and then, by a careful examination of the Minutes of 1797, I conducted the meeting to the conclusion, that all which was not then nor subsequently altered, remains in the hands of your Preachers to this day, for the conservation and enlargement of the church of Christ; and that turned out to be much more than you had apprehended, or even now seem willing to admit.

"There is a vast difference," you say, "in the claim Mr. Wesley had upon his people, and the connexion of Preachers and people since his death." You will not forget that the pastoral authority in question was exercised by his Assistants in their circuits, and not only by himself. As, then, you have not said in what respects our relation to our people is changed, nor proved that it is changed in any respect, the assertion may pass at its own value. But you say, "1797 was a new era, a new beginning," Dr. Warren calls it so; and that then, "they," (the *laws*, I suppose you mean, though you say, "the citations from the Minutes of the Conferences held since Mr. Wesley's death, and prior to the plan of pacification in the address of 1797,) were all set aside for more popular laws, at least as it respects the societies." You were not the author of the imagination, that in 1797 all pastoral authority was swept away, and the societies delivered up to their own control, or rather, to the control of a small portion of their number, possessing no pastoral character or office; others before you have, of late, been able to dispose of that authority in as summary and wholesale a manner. Taking a few general expressions contained in the comment on what the Conference had given up, and giving to those expressions an interpretation as general as the words

can bear, your southern authority was able to make out the case at once, and without difficulty. But unfortunately for the soundness of the conception, it has no support in the rule itself. There, in the book, is the document, specifying, in so many particulars, what the Conference did actually resign; and it is quite incapable of being adduced to testify to so entire an abolition of the pastoral authority. I showed the meeting,—That the Superintendent's office was not taken away and put into other hands, that he was not placed in a state of subordination to local meetings, as your resolutions, in their first shape asserted; for *he* still admits into society, and expels from society; *he* still selects men for office, appoints them to office, and removes them from office;—only in the exercise of these powers of his superintendency, “Our societies have a full check on the Superintendent, by the means of their Leaders” and Quarterly “Meetings:”—a Superintendent therefore, though under restriction, is a Superintendent still. I further showed, that though the jurisdiction of District Committees, in “financial” and “all other temporal matters,” was altered, and all demands of support for the Preachers, made by the circuits from the General Fund, all proposals to build chapels and divide circuits, were required to be first approved by the respective Quarterly Meetings of the circuits and signed by the Stewards, so that the power which they had before, of originating as well as determining such measures, being given up, they retained only the authority to negative such claims and proposals when presented; yet they were not divested of their spiritual jurisdiction, which was to assist the Conference in “the preservation of our whole economy, as the Rev. Mr. Wesley left it.” On the contrary, their authority in matters of discipline was more expressly defined; they were made answerable for “the execution of the laws,” and their power was augmented on that account.

In your critique upon my address, if such it can be called, you say, “much of what you did assert was only opinion, and your own explanation of law.” I read over those Minutes of the Conference of 1797, which are said to have been infringed, and pointed out their meaning. Have *you* taken up any one rule, and shown that I perverted or mistook its meaning? You refer to the rule of expulsion for immorality, and say, “your interpretation of rule is to me very objectionable.” I cannot help that; but what does that prove? Not that I am wrong. You think that it is



not enough that immorality is "proved at a Leaders' Meeting;" the majority ought to determine the judgment to be pronounced. My reply to this is, it is fair matter of opinion; but it is not the Methodism of 1797, for which you so strenuously contend. The rule in question was made, as the comment says, to prevent *clandestine* expulsions, and which the Conference, and the many respectable Laymen who concurred in the arrangement of 1797, judged would be effectual, when the proof of guilt and the sentence of expulsion, were to be "in the presence of a whole meeting of Leaders;" and when the Superintendent was told that if he acted partially or unjustly, he would be visited, and all possible justice done to any whom he had injured. If you think that this exercise of discipline ought to be taken out of the preachers' hands, you are certainly at liberty to state that as your opinion; only, let it not be pretended that this *was done in 1797*, for you cannot adduce any thing from the Minutes to any such effect. "Rights," you say, "were given to the Local Preachers' and Leaders' Meetings," by the address of 1797. This was never questioned; and let my brethren everywhere enjoy and use those rights undisturbed, say I, so long as they commit no wrong of any kind, either on the orthodoxy, the purity, or the peace of our Connexion. But if, alleging those rights, they would claim to protect, in membership and in office, men that teach false doctrine, that do immoral acts, that set all rules made to preserve the peace and order of our societies at defiance;—"heretics," that is, according to Mr. Wesley's interpretation of the word *αιρετικον*, in Tit. iii, 10, men who "occasion strife and animosities, schisms, and parties in the church," and whom Titus is enjoined to "reject," ("παραιτου, cast him out of the church," says Macknight,) "after the first and second admonition;" then, to such a claim, the answer is, that no man has a private right, no assembly of men a conventional right, to do a public wrong; and this would be to wrong the whole Christian church, and more especially that society immediately concerned. In such a case a superior authority *ought* to interfere, and "execute the laws."

Perhaps it would relieve you from the difficulty which you feel in conceiving how such authority was continued and increased to District Committees by the "Miscellaneous Regulations" of 1797, after the letter of concession had been sent out, and yet no intention felt on the part of the Conference to "take the people by guile," by viewing the

subject in this, which I believe to be the just light. District Committees were instituted to preserve discipline in a given vicinity, during the intervals of Conference. They were not intended to deal with one case where discipline should be put in jeopardy, or at an end, more than with another; so that the removal of official men from office, expulsion from society, or any thing else included in the powers that year conceded to the people, were not intended, exclusively, to be rendered subject to their interference; but *all cases*, where ordinary means failed, were committed to their jurisdiction, and they were to see the law executed and discipline kept up, whomsoever that execution might affect, and in whatever way.

The doctrine of the Southwark Address, which you so tenaciously hold, that District Committees were "regulations to meet misrule or faction among the preachers," it is impossible to maintain, unless it can be shown that the "affairs of Methodism" embrace only Preachers and their doings; that "grievances" can be inflicted or suffered only by them; and that the "laws" are only for them, and not also for the people; or that they only, by any possibility, can break the laws, and so call forth the power made responsible for their execution.

You think I ought to have put your motion to the vote, and you would have been satisfied with the issue; for you have always submitted to a majority fairly obtained—I suppose you mean, which no effort had been made to prepossess. I respect the decision of majorities too, when so obtained, in all cases which are, by the constitution of Methodism, consigned to their decision. But where does any principle of that constitution give to meetings, however composed, and wherever assembled, authority to vote away itself, or any one of its fundamental principles? I put it to any person's candour, who is capable of judging in such matters, whether any man, sent among a people to administer a system, civil or ecclesiastical, would not prove himself incompetent, were he to take their vote whenever any of his people might choose to deny or call in question some important part of that system. But you, and the brethren with you, only "wished to state to the Conference, as your opinion, that no local preacher or leader could (can) be removed from office or membership but by the concurrence of a majority of the meeting of which he might (may) be a member." This you are still at liberty state; but you wanted to render the statement official, and pledge your Superintendent and his brethren, your



Trustees, your Stewards, *all* your Leaders, *nolens volens*, in short, your *circuit*, to the doctrine, if a majority of hands were held up for the motion;—then, indeed, a circular sent out, and headed, “Liverpool North Circuit,” would have been somewhat appropriate. Now you own that a “muster” was made that evening to “oppose” this; and, if this “muster” had been left in a minority, they might have had recourse to the best expedient which then offered, and sent a protest to Conference. This would have placed you, with your resolutions denying an important part of Methodism, on the vantage ground; and our friends who were for “our whole economy,” would have been left to contend with the disadvantage. But what you wished to state to the Conference is what “reason cannot but admit, and an unprejudiced judgment would not oppose.” This is rather high assumption. It assumes that you know, under all circumstances, what reason can and cannot admit; it assumes that your judgment, and that of the brethren with you, was unbiassed and correct, whilst all that composed the “muster” opposed to your views were in a state of prejudice. The question here, however, is not what your reason or mine can or cannot admit; but what *their* reason admitted, thirty years ago, who made and agreed to these rules; for you and I have years ago subscribed them, and now lie under pledge, you under a tacit, and I under a formal pledge, not to “*mend* our rules, but *keep* them.” Then I refer you here to Mr. Watson’s proof, that cases may arise when a District Committee, composed according to the rule of 1797, and responsible for “the execution of the laws,” may and ought to interfere, and “remove from office and from membership, as the several cases may appear to them to require.”

Office, as a Methodist local preacher, or leader, you think is not desirable, unless you participate in the government of the church. Then it is not sufficient to be the assistant of others, in turning sinners from their ways, gathering men out of the world into Christian society, and preserving them, by God’s blessing, “from the world unspotted,” so as to be instrumental among others, and subordinate to others, in leading up our race to heaven—you must *govern*, or office is not worth having! There may be here, my dear brother, a little less humility than saints, even not of the first order, have usually evinced. But this may pass. If, by participation in the government of the church, you mean the entire control of all financial

matters, subject only to the established rules and usages of the Connexion ; and the possession and exercise of a strong and effectual guard upon those that labour among you, as your Ministers and Pastors, that they neither teach false doctrine, pervert discipline, nor act immorally,—these you have, without question. But if you aspire to decide, absolutely, who shall remain in membership with the church, this is more than *participation* in government, it is government itself:—you then govern your Pastor, and in cases too, where his conscience, the purity of his church, and the answer which he must give to Almighty God, are all deeply concerned. If, indeed, you were the Pastor of the church ; if you renewed from time to time the tokens of membership to persons in society, and dispensed among them “the communion of the blood” and of “the body of Christ,” then, as Mr. Baxter argues in such cases, whatever counsel you might take of others, you ought to be the final judge of unworthiness, as you *alone* would be answerable to God for your voluntary actions. In that case, no person or number of persons under your care, ought to require you to retain as a member one whom you had proved unworthy ; though, as he still admits, they might justly require you to acquaint them with the reasons why you deemed him unworthy, of course by placing before them the evidence of delinquency ;—such right of governing the church you would unquestionably then possess. But as you are not the Pastor, though a valuable assistant to the Pastor, you ought cheerfully to leave this function where, in Methodism, it has ever been ; and where, I think, right reason and Scripture decide that it should remain.

You refer to what you call “the pecuniary results” of a leader’s official labours, and say, they are “almost all for the benefit of the Travelling Preachers.” Though you have stooped, I think, to some insinuations unworthy of a fair and candid critic, yet you are, I believe, an honourable and Christian man, and did not intend to go to the armoury of infidelity for weapons to assail us : you would leave that to others less scrupulous as to the arms which they employ, and the manner in which they use them, when their warfare is against “the ministers of God.” You did not intend to draw forth once more the rusty and broken weapon, with which Thomas Paine and others formerly sought to wound the honourable and independent feelings of the priesthood—I mean the old sarcasm against them for receiving payment for their labour. “Nothing,” said Bishop Watson, in a letter to that infidel, “is so much a

man's own, as his labour and ingenuity ; and it is entirely consonant to the law of nature, that by the innocent use of these he should provide for his subsistence. Husbandmen, artists, soldiers, physicians, lawyers, all let out their labour and talents for a stipulated reward ; why may not a priest do the same ?" And, says an authority which *you* respect, " So hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." It appears, however, that you could not, at the time, resist the impulse which you felt, to refer to what you do for our "pecuniary benefit." You might, I think, have spared the reference. If it could be shown, that the labours of your Ministers are for *themselves*, then, indeed, it would appear that there is obligation, which, of course, it would be quite *generous*, on your part, to teach them never to forget ; but if the ministry be for those that give and receive contributions ; if it be *you* that we serve in the Gospel ; and if your contributions, when given and received, are still in your own hands, to apportion in what manner and to what amount you may decide, subject only to general rules and usages of the Connexion ; then the reference that would humble us is not justly made, unless it can be shown that the "labourer is" *not* "worthy of his reward." There is still less justice in so referring to the subject, because in the Gospel of our Saviour which we are called to preach ; in the ordinances of God which we administer ; in the time and toil which we devote to your service, you have *value received*, and more, if it be not your own fault, for all that you contribute.

Having now noticed most of the topics introduced into your letter, allow me to say that you have been placed before our society, by the zeal of your friend, in a very unenviable position. What does your letter prove ? "A great and fundamental question is," you say, "involved ;" but what that question is, appears but very darkly from your letter :—and you "claim all the *right* that you understand to belong to your office." By putting your claim upon your own *understanding* of right, to say the least, you put it upon equivocal ground. Are you sure that you have duly *considered* your own Methodist rights, not apart from the rights of others, the other members of society, and your ministers, but in connexion with their rights ? Are you sure that no partiality biassed your mind ? were you disposed to be liberal in what you allowed to be the rights of others, when you so deliberately adjusted the question of mutual right, and, so much to your own satisfaction, settled your own claim ? And, after all, are you

sure that you *understood*, or now *understand*, this comprehensive question, of which you have apparently disposed? These are subjects to which many who talk freely, and even essay to write upon them, I suspect, have given but a slight attention, and some none at all. But it is inattention to such mutual relations and the duties which they involve, and not the wise and dispassionate exercise of our legitimate ministerial and pastoral functions, that places thoughtless and heady men so often in opposition to their Pastors; which, to use your own word, gives "rise to continued uneasiness and dissension" in societies of Christians. What right do you *understand* to belong to your office, which is denied you? If you say, the right of saying, as a leader and local preacher, who shall remain in office and society, in all cases, and that, under no circumstances, can District Committees interfere; ought you not to have produced the rules upon this "fundamental question," and proved that they invest you with this right, just as you appear to claim it? And ought you not, before you appeared in print, to have taken the trouble to produce Mr. Watson's argument against your "interpretation of the laws, in the address" of 1797, which interpretation assumes that there can be no interference with your exercise of what you call your right, whether you exercise it rightly or not, and exposed that argument, if you could, so as to have enabled our "circuits," to which appeal is made, to perceive at once the fallacies which have deceived him? It will go but a little way with the thinking and sober part of our societies, to put this forth as *your* interpretation, unless you can show that your interpretation is correct. As you do not seem to have anticipated the printing of your letter, this may be pleaded in excuse of these omissions on your part; but surely your "*friend*" ought to have taken this trouble. I dare say, however, he felt that this would be too serious an undertaking. You admit that, on your interpretation, "there may exist, by possibility, cases for which you can find no adequate provision;" cases, of course, arising out of what these laws conceded, and demanding interference, or your remark has no relation to the subject; but that on the construction which you impugn, there is "provision in every case in the range of possibility." What follows on this admission? Why, that the Conference is bound, on your view, to make such provision for cases which may arise, as shall be adequate to meet them;—a service which it is spared on the view to which you object, because that provision is made already. Is not this trifling with the question? If,

as I suppose, you think the provision too large; why, then say so; and the circuits will know that you, and not we, are for shaping Methodism into some "*modern mode*." On this subject, whatever may be your own mind, I fear you have got into the hands of "friends" who have "ulterior" views with which they may have deemed it prudent not to acquaint you; and that you may find, when they have led you on to a point from which you may find it inconvenient to recede, that their aim, from the first, was not to "preserve peace," but to destroy it; not to "prevent," but to cause "schism;" unless important parts of Methodism were conceded to them, and they were permitted to re-fashion the system to their own notions.

Several of the brethren have marvelled that you did not understand why your quotation from Sharon Turner was cheered, by those who were opposed to your motion. I will tell you. You had assumed that an "evil presses" in our Connexion, and you and your brethren had set yourselves to remove it. How? By legal and constitutional means? Certainly not. In order to carry your point, you and others had circulated pamphlets and letters, tending to prejudice those who read them against the Conference, and to sow enmity and dissention in our society. Is there nothing in the pacific regulations of 1795, and the two following years, to discountenance and prohibit this? Do you know, and especially does your "friend," who has got your letter printed, and sent it abroad, know, that there is such a rule as the following? "What can be done to prevent unruly or unthinking men from disturbing our people? *Ans.* Let no man, nor number of men, in our Connexion, on any account or occasion, *circulate letters*, call meetings, do, or attempt to do, any thing new, till it has been first appointed by the Conference." You have; therefore, quoted authority rather unhappily; for, according to the quotation, your method tends "to give a continuity which cannot be terminated," to the evil you have assumed to exist.

Just one word more. What "friend" is this who has formed you into a pedestal, and, to make himself the better seen and heard, has mounted upon your head; who, to make the singular exhibition as likely to obtain regard as possible, has written you "the excellent author of the letter and proposer of the resolutions," and signed you "Leader and Local Preacher;" who calls out so stoutly for assistance, and seems exceedingly apprehensive that, after all, London, Sheffield, and a few other places, at present nameless, may



be all that will advance to assist him? By this time he has surely asked your pardon, for putting you to a use to which, from your note it would appear you did not intend to put yourself. Why did he not sign his name? Would it not have given *weight* to what he has written? Why did he not honourably leave your letter to your own disposal, and write something for the benefit of our Connexion himself? However, does he know that in London it is only one circuit out of five that "contests" any "matter" at all? Does he know that it is not *his* matter that the Sheffield circuit contests, or rather, on which the friends there have agreed to address the Conference? Why should he conceal the fact, that our neighbours, in the Liverpool South Circuit, appear to be too well occupied, and to enjoy too much satisfaction, to be likely to do much in his way? In our own Circuit, what has been done? "A majority," he says, "of the male leaders, local preachers, and stewards, have signed their names to the resolutions;" and "these," you say, "are the interested persons." There is another class of persons, that, I believe, think themselves interested in the peace and prosperity of our society; that, besides the religious interest which every private member, in common with those who hold office, may take, have a serious pecuniary interest in our welfare, being responsible for large sums upon our chapels in this town—I mean the Trustees. Why omit them in the enumeration of interested persons, and eligible to sign a document like yours, but because not one, I believe, has signed it, or thinks with you? They, with both the Circuit Stewards, most of the other Stewards, and many of the Leaders, some of them aged, long-tried, and unwavering friends of Methodism, altogether differ from your views, and are averse to your proceedings; and deeply regret, with myself and my brethren in the ministry, that there should be among us brethren who are so ready to seize occasion to "agitate societies" which are in great peace, and in which religion is gradually working all its blissful effects. We hope, however, even here, that the attempt to trouble and to scatter us, will fail. The members of our society, in general, are carefully working out their salvation. No panic has yet struck them, by the attempts to light up the beacon, and create an alarm of danger to their Methodistic rights and privileges. They have no cause for fear; and I trust their wisdom and piety, by God's blessing, will preserve them. As to the "circuits" in our Connexion, which your "friend"

calls to "do their duty," they, I have no doubt, will hearken to his call, though not as he intends. The thousands of intelligent and pious persons in the societies, who have not his sharpness of sight to discover that this is a crisis; who see no new nor illegal power assumed by the Conference, no "right" taken from the people, nor wish, on the part of the Conference, to take away the people's rights; who have understanding to perceive that all the clamour which is sought to be raised against the Conference, is, really, because it has used its just authority to protect the peaceful majority against the turbulent minority; those that venerated Methodism, for the sake of its Founder, and for the signal service which God has caused it to render to mankind, and would preserve it in its integrity, against those who, after lighting up men's passions into flame, and fanning them into fervent heat, would be content to throw the system, as the Children of Israel threw their jewels of gold, into the fire, and be prepared, like them, to worship the re-production, though it should "come out" as little fitted to inspire veneration as the "molten calf:"—our serious and devout members throughout our Connexion will, I venture to predict, continue their confidence to men who have never betrayed it, and are certainly not disposed to betray it now. These, who from the depth of their hearts, and in the fervour of their spirits, daily "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," and in loving her, "prosper;" who pray, "Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces;"—these, until your friend shows better cause for a general rising, will remain at rest; feeling, as Paley somewhere writes of the people's interference with the Government in national affairs, that nothing extravagant, nothing chimerical, nothing doubtful in any considerable degree, can be deemed a sufficient reason for putting the tranquillity of their own Christian society, of our whole Connexion, to hazard, and disturbing that calm in which a good man desires to pass the days of his sojourn on earth.

I am,

My dear Brother,

Affectionately, yours,

JOHN SCOTT.

LIVERPOOL, February 6, 1829.



## POSTSCRIPT.

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WHEN the post brought me your letter in its printed form, I hastened to write you the foregoing answer, which I finished, in substance, on the morning of the above date. I did not make equal haste to publish it, and will acquaint you with my reason. I felt reluctant publicly to expose the disingenuousness of the individual, yet unknown to me, who stole the copy of your letter, and, with a preface of his own, sent it forth in print; because I think it no credit to a Christian society, to have one capable of so acting among its members. I had no desire either, to place myself in public collision with any member of my flock. I therefore determined to wait, until I learned what impression your joint-production made in this town; and whether it was sent to the other circuits in our Connexion. It now appears, that, by your "friend," or some agency which he employs, it has been distributed very widely, and sent to circuits quite remote; that it has been sent, not to official and other members of our society only, but also to persons of other religious denominations, and to others who only attend our ministry; and such has been his zeal to supply each person with a copy, that some have received two. What is the anticipated good of sending it to persons of the two classes last mentioned, and to private members of society? Do you, my dear brother, think the motive of all this, pure? In these liberal times one incurs the risk of being most illiberally treated, or rather, of being very liberally loaded with abuse, if one call some things by their right names. In the church, we are in some danger of overlooking entirely our Saviour's rule of judging men "by their fruits,"

and of maintaining the exercise of charity with indiscriminate application to all persons and things, until we forget the distinction between right and wrong. Yet I will not be deterred from saying, that though a person acting in this manner may profess himself to be the "friend of God and Methodism," he is the friend of neither. His is a factious, I fear a malignant attempt, to disaffect our societies and our hearers to those Ministers, to whom thousands of them "owe even their own selves;" and who are daily proving to numbers more, "the savour of life unto life." Let me, however, assure you, that, as far as I have learned, both in this town and elsewhere, the persons who have received and been made to pay the postage of your letter, have generally felt it an annoyance. Still it is natural for the friends of Methodism to inquire the history of our proceedings, and the state of opinion and feeling in our societies in this town, and more especially in this circuit; and such inquiry I find is made. Inquiry assuredly will not be met with accurate information on these subjects by your letter; still less will a person be able to learn from that production the ground upon which we have acted, and the reasons for our conduct, who have opposed your measures. I publish this letter now, in brief explanation. It shall not remain longer unpublished, that the LIVERPOOL NORTH CIRCUIT stands not pledged to the statements made, nor to the sentiments and feelings expressed in the circular bearing that title. We have a large body of friends in this circuit, Trustees, Stewards, Local Preachers, Leaders, and private members, able and resolved, by God's blessing, to support Methodism unchanged, and who seriously condemn the attempts made by a few to agitate the Connexion. I am thankful that I can here repeat, what I have stated in my letter, that the members of our classes are, in general, seriously and successfully occupied in attention to their spiritual welfare; and never did I meet classes with greater pleasure than, in most instances, I have done the present quarter—this, too, is the feeling of my brethren. That the circulation of so many things against the Conference—pamphlets, circulars, hand-bills—which has been so extensive of late among us, has done no harm, I will

not affirm. If it has done no other harm than divert you from that affectionate and active interest which you could take in promoting our prosperity ; and somewhat prejudice, in a few instances, some that rank among our most pious and valuable men, who have felt it difficult to believe, that where so much obloquy was cast upon the Preachers none was deserved ; if no other effects have been produced, they have, doubtless, served to retard the advancement of the work. But our supreme and steadfast trust is still in Him who has appointed us to His service. Next, our reliance, under Him, is upon the wisdom and piety of our societies. No man who keeps his heart quite right with God, and his affections in healthy and right exercise, will long remain prejudiced against men who affectionately and zealously labour for his welfare, and whose ministry God owns—his heart will correct his judgment. Your preachers have so preached and lived as to prove themselves not unworthy to be regarded as the religious guides and friends of their people : they will, by God's blessing, continue so to live and preach. I am confident of the result. However individuals that spurn all authority unless it be vested in themselves, may act, we shall recover the confidence of the very few who have innocently become unsettled ; we shall collect again into more concentrated energy all the powers of our official and responsible friends, whose principles are sound, and whose attachment has remained unshaken, and lead them with renewed vigour into our Saviour's service ; and I trust, before long, we shall learn that *you* are again with us, in all the parts of our common discipline, as you now are, in all the articles of our common faith.

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